‘Environmental Micro-history. The Value of MPV Franco’s “An Appraisal of Environmental Microhistory: Epistemological and Historiographical Insights”’, in *Fronteiras: Journal of Social, Technological and Environmental Science*, Vol.7, No.3, 2018, pp.262–274.

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March 2019

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Against the background of human-induced climate change as a global phenomenon which impacts are primarily experienced on the local scale, requires that generalities which are typical of e.g. regional rainfall projections (Libanda and Ngonga 2018: *Climate Research*, Vol.26), need best be avoided to focus on the individual or community-level human micro-experiences because this is where most socio-economic havoc and loss of life, is endured. As a result, there are several reasons why this article of MPV Franco is of value.

Firstly, the clear language, presentation and general outline saves time from having to re-read it for clarity. However, having read it anyhow a few more times, was rather worth it. Incidentally, I share Franco’s optimism about micro-history, environmental history and environmental micro-history.

This optimism, I think, stems from ‘[a] growing diversity of methodological approaches’ (Franco, p.263) but also because ‘[e]ach generation of scholarly historians has not a universal but at least a common and characteristic way of looking at the past – a paradigm, if you will’ (Crosby 2016. *Ecological Imperialsim*, p.xv). Whilst Franco’s use of the words micro-historical *approach* and *paradigm* might not find approval amongst all readers, I am comfortable with both since they do not detract from his discussion, neither would they compromise research outcomes.

Franco’s appraisal places environmental microhistory in the middle of the following discussion points:

- Improving our understanding of *specific* events
- *Macro-level insights* are possible and advisable
- The *social relevance* of research vs *policy considerations*

Franco deals with four topics: the indiciary paradigm; context; relations and connections, and the *potential for assisting* macro-level analysis. It is not necessary to repeat their contents here.

Franco's use of Szijartó's, Levi's and his own definitions on the one hand, and that of McNeill and Worster on the other, are useful to keep concepts apart.

The treatments of the 'indiciary paradigm, micro-history and the micro-macro link', places the reader in a position to, if necessary, draw up an own reading list for his/her further indulgence to tackle the various arguments/debates in contemporary micro-history and its relevance to other environmental humanities and/or enviro-sciences. In doing so, Franco brought the following key issues to the reader's attention:

- The linguistic turn
- Contemplation about the fragmentary
- The unsettled views about the *longue durée*
- Singularity and repetition
- Meta-narratives
- 'Exceptional normal'
- Global history
- New qualitativeness
- 'Big questions'

Closer co-operation between micro- and enviro-history will necessitate greater recognition of the 'exceptional normal' *in the environment* as important study interests – in the sense that 'crisis force innovation' (Miller 2019. *The New York Times*, 14/3/2019). Franco's references to Beach, Bonnell and Sodikoff are appropriate, and make interesting reading on their own.

So, when Franco wrote that 'this is a procedure which takes the particular as its starting point […] and proceeds to identify its meaning in the light of its own specific context' (p.263), it brings a number of the above key issues into play. For instance, the micro is, in my view, *already linked* to the macro. How? Through clues, signs and symptoms – meaning the constituent parts of the indiciary paradigm (p.264). In other words, in everyday life, the micro does *not* stand 'separate' or 'outside' of the macro. They are *already* part of the web of life. The 'mutual relations between humankind and the rest of nature' (Franco, p.263) (as McNeill puts it) are not two external or separate from each other relations, because they are the flip-side of the same coin – the environment affects humans, and humans affect the environment. Jason W Moore (2015: *Capitalism in the Web of life. Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*, Verso) termed this 'double internality', meaning, humans in the environment, and the environment in humans.

Useful are the potentialities that Franco provides in how the 'link' between micro-macro takes place: through aspects of communication; through cause-effect relationship that builds links; through inferential work of the historian; through evidence; and imagination (p.264). In so doing no automatic

transfer from the micro to the macro took place (p.266). They are not separable from each other. And to apply Moore's 'double internality': the micro in the macro; the macro in the micro.

Franco's article is, amongst other things, also positively forward-looking: potential empirical research outcomes flowing from Environment micro-history analysis, could come in handy for policy-makers, funders and users of environmental space as a limited natural resource. In my view it also, points towards econometrics, the application of which in Environmental Microhistory, can do no harm. Instead, it brings quantitative considerations into the fold that broadens empirical scope – yet, still within the micro considerations. It also, points towards a greater potential understanding of ecological considerations in future Environmental Microhistorical analysis. This is rather timely and appropriate: when 'a society's baseline conditions are shaken' – today, as it was during the Little Ice Age, 'the treating of historical sources as a way of solving current questions' (Miller 2019: *The New York Times*, 14/3/2019), clearly has policy benefits.

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